

## Episode 37

### **Trips to Umrah and Africa 1975**

The next year, around Sha'ban 1395H, Hazrat Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Yusuf Binnori Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) called this lowly one and informed: "Due to the activities of the Qadiyanis in African countries, the Majlis Tahaffuz Khatm-e-Nubuwwat has proposed a trip to the African countries to enlighten the residents of those nations regarding the reality of the Qadiyanis. This trip would require someone who, besides being well-versed on this topic, is also proficient in English language. I want you to join me on this trip. We shall first perform Umrah during Ramadan, and InshaAllah depart for African countries after Eid." An Umrah during Ramadan, Hazrat's companionship and that too for this blessed purpose! What could be a greater blessing for me than this? The only qualm was that our respected father was confined to a sickbed since the time he suffered a heart attack, and an extended separation from him weighed heavily on my heart. However, Allah Ta'ala made arrangements for this in the form of an invitation that our respected father received from Muslim World League for a conference during Ramadan titled "*Mu'tamar Risaalah al-Masjid*". In normal circumstances, our respected father was not in a state to undertake any journeys. However, he could not bear missing this opportunity to perform Umrah in the blessed month of Ramadan. Due to his illness, he was also invited to bring along one companion. Our respected father had suspended all travels due to his illness, but in view of performing Umrah during the blessed month of Ramadan, he decided to undertake this journey. And as his travel companion, he decided to bring along my honourable brother Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Rafi Sahab. With these arrangements, I was contented that I would be able to remain with my respected father at least during the Umrah, i.e. until Eid. On the other hand, our elder brother Muhammad Wali Raazi Sahab, Hakeem Musharraf Husain and my childhood friend respected Muhammad Kaleem Sahab also got ready for this trip. In this manner, with the grace and benevolence of Allah Ta'ala a caravan of the five of us got ready to accompany our respected father. It was agreed with Hazrat Binnori (may Allah's mercy be upon him) that I would stay with my respected father during Ramadan and would present myself in his company when my respected father returned. We thus departed on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan 1395H on a Saudi Airlines

flight. The plane took off at about 5pm, and God knows how the airlines was managed in those days, but flight attendants offered food immediately after take-off. Since we were fasting, we excused ourselves and thought that they would offer again at Iftar time. However, the plane landed at Dubai at Iftar time and the flight crew sufficed with offering a few dates. We had a very short stay at Dubai airport. When we took off again from Dubai airport and asked the flight attendants for dinner, they replied that we had already refused food in the evening. The plane landed at Riyadh after a while. When we entered the airport, such chaos ensued that we could not even get a seat to sit. The staff in one room would send us to another and the staff in the second room would signal towards the first. We somehow found a place for our respected father to sit and thereafter ping-ponged between those rooms, until the flight took off again. This time again the flight crew retained their aloofness, until we landed at Jeddah airport. We had to wait here for quite some time for representatives of the Muslim World League to come, and at the end we learned that one suitcase of Hakeem Musharraf Sahab was missing. When we registered the missing baggage complaint and finally arrived in Makkah Mukarramah, we were allotted a room in Funduq Makkah, which is located to the north-east of the sacred Haram, opposite Bab al-Umrah. This was considered the best hotel in Makkah Mukarramah at the time. But by the time we reached our rooms, we saw that perhaps only 10-15 minutes remained for Suhoor time to end. We rushed to the hotel's restaurant but the food was almost finished. Our hunger had reached a crescendo, so for Suhoor we gulped down bread, butter and whatever remained, and found it all a great bounty in this state. Soon the time of Suhoor ended, and upon hearing the captivating sound of adhan, we headed for the sacred Haram. We were concerned about our respected father's health after such an arduous journey, so we had requested him to pray in the hotel room and rest there. After praying Fajr in the sacred Haram, our hearts desired to perform Umrah right away. With the grace and benevolence of Allah, we performed Umrah after the prayer. The heat was at its apex and the throat felt completely dry during Sa'ee. But that Umrah performed in Ramadan had its own charm.

When we returned to the hotel after Umrah, our respected father was ready to perform his Umrah. The late Hakeem Musharraf Husain Sahab, Kaleem Sahab and myself took him to the sacred Haram. In view of his ailing health, we expected him to be unable to perform Tawaf on

foot. We thus insisted on him to perform it on a conveyance, but he did not accept this and began Tawaf on foot, and completed it on foot. For Sa'ee, however, he used a wheelchair. By the time we returned to the hotel, the time for Friday prayer was approaching. We offered Friday prayer in the sacred Haram and thereafter rested for some time. This was my first time breaking fast in the Haram. There used to be a pebbled floor in front of the Turkish building of the Haram. We all sat there. Water coolers were not in vogue, so we filled *zamzam* in small clay *surahis* for drink. A peculiar feature of these *surahis* was that the hotter and dryer the weather and the more intense the hot wind, the cooler would be the water stored inside. When the adhan was called during the intense heat and the sound of cannon shot was heard, it felt as if the cool water in the *surahi* had breathed a new life into the body.

“*Mu'tamar Risaalah al-Masjid*” was being convened in an old royal palace, said to originally belong to the founder of the Saudi kingdom King Abdul Aziz bin Saud (may Allah's mercy be upon him), located beyond Ghaza. Eminent scholars and speakers from various parts of the Islamic world presented gems of eloquence and rhetoric. Hazrat Maulana Qari Muhammad Tayyib Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) was also in attendance. An article was supposed to be presented from our respected father as well, but due to his illness he could not bear the toil of writing. He commanded me to write and present something, which I complied with. This article has been published in our respected father's collection of Arabic articles.

We were blessed to continue staying in Makkah Mukarramah for a few days after the conference, and this stay in our respected father's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) company was quite memorable. His condition would go through crests and troughs, but his eagerness to perform Tawaf was unabated. Some time each day, he would go to the sacred Haram with one of us and perform Tawaf.

Thereafter we presented ourselves in Madinah Munawwarah. The best hotel there was Funduq at-Tayseer (which has now probably been merged into the Haram), located to the north-east of the Haram. We stayed there. We were blessed to spend the last ten days of Ramadan in Madinah Munawwarah itself, and returned to Jeddah on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Here, we stayed in a hotel named “Funduq ar-Riyad” near the Old Airport of Jeddah. Our respected father's (may Allah's mercy be

upon him) flight was booked for 11pm the next day. Hazrat Mufti Rafi Sahab and elder brother Maulana Muhammad Wali Raazi Sahab would accompany him on this flight. Our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) desired to perform an Umrah during this time, but he was quite exhausted due to continuous journeys, so we requested him to rest in the hotel. Since I had to remain in Hijaz until after Eid, I stayed with him in the hotel, while all other companions went for Umrah. Our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) slept at night, after which, with the grace of Allah, he was rejuvenated to some extent. I spent the entire next day with him, until my companions returned from their Umrah in the evening and the flight time at night approached. Separation from my respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) weighed quite heavily on me, because a few days after Eid I was supposed to depart for Africa with Hazrat Binnori (may Allah's mercy be upon him) and I had no idea when I would return. The mere thought of this prolonged separation in his state of illness weighed like a mountain on me. My face showed signs of grief. When bidding farewell to any relative or friend for a journey, our respected father would recite Ayat al-Kursi and blow on him. And though he would love his children a lot, it was not his habit to express this love by kissing them. But when he bid me farewell that time, he recited the supplication and thereafter spontaneously kissed me on the forehead, the sweetness of which I cannot forget. Thereafter he went inside and disappeared from view. The late Hakeem Musharraf Husain Sahab and my friend Kaleem Sahab had planned to spend another day with me and celebrate Eid here, and to return to Pakistan on the evening of Eid itself. After seeing off my respected father, the three of us departed from the airport at about 1:30am. We had been staying in hotels until now, but now after reaching Makkah Mukarramah we would be staying at a quarter in Madrasa Sawlatiyyah, whose key was with Kaleem Sahab. The crescent was not seen that night so the next day would be the last fast. From the airport, we reached the bus stop from where one could take a wagon to Makkah Mukarramah, and boarded one such wagon. When it stopped at a village named Bahrah, which is about half-way between Jeddah and Makkah Mukarramah, I noticed Kaleem Sahab suddenly expressing signs of extreme nervousness and anxiety. Initially he did not tell anything because he was apprehensive that we would rebuke him, but when we insisted, he informed that he had forgotten the key to our room in Madrasa Sawlatiyyah at Funduq ar-Riyad in Jeddah. We were

thunderstruck; even if we reached Makkah Mukarramah, we would not get a room, and it was also not appropriate to awaken any caretaker at this time. Besides, we were also not sure if he would have an extra key. There remained no other option except to get off this wagon, take another wagon to the wagon station, go to the hotel from there, take the key, return to the wagon station and take another wagon to Makkah Mukarramah. We thus had to follow this mode of action. It was the grace of Allah that we found the key in the hotel, and finally boarded another wagon for Makkah Mukarramah. We had lost sleep over several days, so when the wagon moved, gusts of cool wind put all three of us into a deep sleep. And we awoke when we had reached Bab Ibrahim of the Haram and the captivating sound of Fajr adhan was echoing from the Masjid al-Haram, which meant that Suhoor time had ended. We thus began the last fast of Ramadan such that we did not get time to even moisten our dry throats with water. All the hotels we had stayed in so far were airconditioned, but now we were staying in an old quarter in Madrasa Sawlatiyyah a portion of which was packed with sacks of grains. Though it was equipped with a fan, it only blew hot wind during daytime. Anyway, we reached the sacred Haram in the evening and helped ourselves to a blissful Iftar. Thereafter we returned to our room. After Isha, we had dinner amidst the graces of Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Saleem Sahab. And we learned that to be able to pray Eid prayer in the Haram, we would have to leave by about 3am.

## **Eid in Makkah Mukarramah**

When we left at 3am, caravans upon caravans of people were thronging towards the Haram. Alhamdulillah, we found a place in the courtyard. After spending the remaining part of the night there, Fajr prayer was held, after which Takbeers were proclaimed on loudspeakers from the Mukabbirah until sunrise. Those attending for prayers also recited the Takbeers. At that point, an elderly Arab person sitting a few rows behind us stood up and loudly complained against communal Takbeers with the words: “هذه بدعة شنيعة منكرة”, meaning: “This is a very reprehensible *bid’ah*”. What he meant is that in his knowledge, such communal loud proclamations of Takbeer at the time of Eid are not proven from the practice of the Noble Messenger (ﷺ) and the Companions (though some traditions do support this practice). Anyway! The Eid prayer took place in great glory and splendour. After the prayer, the crowd gradually dispersed and we

returned to Madrasa Sawlatiyyah. After Asr, the late Hakeem Musharraf Husain Sahab and Kaleem Sahab were to return to Jeddah for their return flight to Pakistan. I went to the bus stop to see them off, and they departed. After enjoying seventeen full days in their lively company, I was left all alone. My mind was quite affected by this, and I alleviated this feeling by presenting myself in the sacred Haram. Thereafter I observed the bizarre scene of the entire city becoming desolate and quiet immediately after Eid. All bazaars, including restaurants and coffeeshops which would be seen bustling with activity day and night during Ramadan, were closed and silence engulfed them.

On the second day of Eid, I was thinking that it must be Eid in Pakistan. After spending the morning in the sacred Haram, when I returned to the quarter in Madrasa Sawlatiyyah, I was alone there as well. This was my first time spending Eid away from parents and siblings, and I was also worried about our respected father's health. No news had arrived until now regarding their safe arrival in Pakistan. These thoughts and feelings weighed heavily on the heart. In this condition, while I was all alone in the room, suddenly Hazrat Maulana Saleem Sahab's son Maulana Muhammad Shameem Sahab's voice called from outside the room; "Brother Taqi! There is a telephone call from Karachi." International calls were not so easy to dial in those days. I arrived at his office amidst mixed feelings of happiness and anxiety and picked up the phone. Elder brother Hazrat Mufti Muhammad Rafi Sahab was on the other side, who then passed the phone to our respected father. It was learned that Alhamdulillah they had reached home safely. I still remember the delight and sweetness felt during that call.

Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Binnori Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), with whom I was to visit Africa, was still in Madinah Munawwarah and was planned to arrive in Makkah Mukarramah by the 5<sup>th</sup> of Shawwal, and the trip would begin thereafter. This meant that I had to spend these five days after Eid here in Makkah Mukarramah itself. Alhamdulillah the crowd at the sacred Haram had subsided by that time, so there were excellent opportunities to peacefully perform Tawaf and visit blessed sites. I can never thank Allah Ta'ala enough for bestowing those opportunities. However, the silence prevailed outside the sacred Haram for all those five days. May Allah Ta'ala bestow the highest stations in Jannah to Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Saleem

Sahab and Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Shameem Sahab, for they inundated this lowly one with their graces, until Hazrat Binnori arrived. Hazrat Maulana Dr Abdur Razzaq Iskander Sahab (may his shade be extended) arrived together with him, and soon the trip began in their blissful companionship. We first stayed in Jeddah for a night or two, after which we departed for Nairobi, which was our first destination in the tour of Africa.

## **Trip to Nairobi**

The weather in Nairobi was rather cool and pleasant. This was my first visit to this city, and I experienced the lush green landscapes and charming climate here for the first time. Since this city is quite close to the equator, the prayer times do not change much throughout the year. And though countries near the equator have a relatively warm climate, the weather here is pleasantly cool most of the year due to its high elevation. Here, a student of Hazrat Binnori's Maulana Mutee ur-Rasool Sahab had arranged our accommodation in a spacious bungalow belonging to a local businessman, about whom I only remember that he was called Agha Sahab and was probably originally from Afghanistan.

Allah Ta'ala had bestowed the companionship of Hazrat Binnori (may Allah's mercy be upon him) numerous times and he would always treat me very benevolently despite me not deserving the least of it. But this time, I desired to study something from him and receive the blessing of being his direct student. To attain this honour, I had brought Hafiz Ibn Kathir's book on Principles of Hadith from Makkah Mukarramah, so that I could read it before Hazrat. When I presented my request, Hazrat accepted and instructed to read it to him after Fajr. Regarding the method of teaching, he said: "Go on reading the text. I will comment at whichever point I want to say something." This would take place after Fajr during our stay in Nairobi, and Dr Abdur Razzaq Iskander Sahab would also participate in those sessions.

Hazrat Binnori (may Allah's mercy be upon him) was an elder with a rather jovial demeanour and had a penchant for sightseeing, and he was also aware of my fondness for sightseeing. In view of this, he took this lowly one for sightseeing around Nairobi under the guidance of Maulana Mutee ur-Rasool. I "visited" chimpanzees for the first time in my life in a safari park. It was also here that

an indigenous tribal woman was seen about whom the locals informed that this indigenous tribe was originally cannibalistic, but when its members migrate to cities, they become civilized over time. During this stay, we also went out of Nairobi city up to the equator, which goes through lush green mountains and valleys.

On Friday, Hazrat Binnori's (may his secret be sanctified) talk was held in the Central Mosque of Nairobi, after which I gave an English speech, which was probably a summary of Hazrat's talk. Thereafter the itinerary for working in various parts of Africa was drafted. For this, we had to buy tickets to further destinations in Africa from Nairobi itself. To this end, we contacted a travel agency through Maulana Mutee ur-Rasool Sahab and began proceedings to purchase tickets to various countries.

I was constantly anxious about my respected father's ailing health. Hazrat Binnori (may Allah's mercy be upon him) would also sense this. Due to this worry, I had lost my hunger as well, but one effect of the pleasant weather and environment in Nairobi was that I ate one lunch with appetite. Afterwards, Hazrat Binnori remarked to me: "I was quite glad to notice that today you ate with appetite." These words made me realize that Hazrat loved this lowly servant like a son and would take care of such minute things as well. May Allah have infinite mercy upon him.

After breakfast one morning, I received an urgent message that my elder brother Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Rafi Usmani had called Maulana Mutee ur-Rasool Sahab's office, asking this lowly one to call back. This foreboding phone call fanned the flames of apprehension about our respected father's health. I frantically made my way to an office from where an international call could be made. Alhamdulillah the call went through as soon as the trunk call was booked. Bhai Sahab informed that our respected father had suffered a second heart attack and was admitted to the same hospital as before. Now I plunged into a quandary. While the heart ardently yearned to be with our respected father as soon as possible, the objective for which this trip was undertaken was at its very initial stage, and I had promised Hazrat Binnori (may his secret be sanctified) to accompany him in the entire tour. I was thus embarrassed to talk to him about returning to Pakistan. At the same time, it was also necessary to inform Hazrat of everything. He loved our respected father very much, so as soon as he heard the news about his health, he



instructed: “You should return to Karachi as soon as possible.” And he also said something along the lines: “I am aware that you adore Hazrat Mufti Sahab and he adores you, so I am hopeful that InshaAllah his health will have a positive effect if you visit him. His life is very valuable, so do not worry about cutting off this trip in the middle.” Hearing these words from Hazrat, my heart was also contented. However, it was not known when the next flight to Karachi would be available, because flights from Nairobi to Karachi did not operate daily. But it was the grace of Allah the Blessed and Most High that a flight was scheduled to fly to Karachi that very evening, and Alhamdulillah I got a seat. One major process for travelling from Kenya to Pakistan was Yellow Fever vaccination. A lengthy procedure had to be followed to fulfill this, in absence of which one had to spend several days in quarantine at the airport. But may Allah Ta’ala recompense Maulana Mutee ur-Rasool Sahab the best of rewards, for he completed all procedures by evening through his special contacts, and I departed for Karachi by night. After supplicating throughout the flight, I landed in Karachi and went straight to the hospital. Our respected father was delighted at seeing this lowly one. Alhamdulillah the effects of the heart attack were subsiding and his health was improving. It felt as if I had acquired Paradise on earth. Alhamdulillah he had to stay in hospital for relatively fewer days this time and he soon returned home. But now his life had become confined to his room and bed. He would carry out everything from this sickbed, from management of Darul Uloom to writing Fatwas, Maariful Quran and other works.